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Transtime, Techne & Enchantment

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In *Untimely Matter*, J. Gill Harris suggests that linear accounts of early modern materiality tend to ‘other’ technologies of the past. But this *weirding* denies both our present day enchantment by technologies and the persistence of technologies of enchantment. Instead, he proposes an untimely, polytemporal continuum. Encountering objects as manifestations of ‘palimpsested time’, a multiple layering of past–present–future, allows things to “chafe against the sovereignty of the moment– state” [...] to “cross temporal borders”.⁷

Assembled together, a bestiary of Lauschmann’s works, each operating according to its own logic, is both animated and frozen, overclocked and underclocked. His automata invoke premodern forms of carpentry that, rather than simplifying, clarifying or ordering the world, generate more static, feedback and noise, yet more *stuff* to meditate upon, experience through and perform with. These works generate their own magic circle, drawing other things into their dynamic polytemporal rhythms, making matter full of future possibilities for supersessions, conjunctions and explosions.

⁷ Jonathan Gill Harris, *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008, p2.

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Screening curated by Julia Barbour, Filipe Caiero, Adam Castle, Harry Maberly and Hong Anh Nguyen.

· Coming up in the festival ·
Friday 11th Dec
Rachel Maclean + international shorts
5.55pm, Filmhouse
Saturday 12th Dec
EAMIF at Summerhall
2pm – 7pm

www.eamif.com



EAMIF

Edinburgh | Artists’ Moving Image Festival

Torsten Lauschmann + international shorts
Thursday 10th December 2015
FILMHOUSE

Welcome to the second screening at the first Edinburgh Artists’ Moving Image Festival (EAMIF). Tonight, alongside the work of Torsten Lauschmann, we present six artists selected from our international open call, employing ideas around appropriation and collage, often blurring the line between mass media and propaganda. We have also invited collectif_fact to show one of their films. In this programme we are proud to present an especially commissioned text by Neil Mulholland, who shall lead a Q&A with Torsten Lauschmann.

The festival aims to make artists’ moving image more accessible,
and so all films are shown with subtitles in English.

RUNNING ORDER:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 • A Story Like No Other (2011)
collectif_fact
(Annelore Schneider & Claude Piguet) | 6 • I Don’t Wanna Talk About It (2012)
Stephanie Hough |
| 2 • You See Davis (2013)
Rembrant Quiballo | 7 • Pause (2012)
John Kelley |
| 3 • Ass to Mouth (2015)
Guy Oliver | 8 • Skippping Over Damaged Areas (2010) |
| 4 • RE: (2014)
Stefan Adamski | 9 • Crazy Paving (2015)
Torsten Lauschmann |
| 5 • My Arts Council Head Office Fantasy
(2015)
Paula Varjack | 10 • Q&A with Torsten Lauschmann,
led by Neil Mulholland |

Transtime, Techne & Enchantment: Torsten Lauschmann

· Neil Mulholland ·

A compendium of dazzling mechanical, cerebral and decorative skills interweaving people, found objects, photography, video, audio, online and interactive tools, computer generated imagery, motors, kinetics, sensors and micro processors, Torsten Lauschmann’s work reverberates with the premodern condition of the arts as techne. In the sense that it enables a type of agency more common before the invention of ‘The Modern System of the Arts’; his work is decidedly *nonmodern*.¹ Lauschmann bestows the status of ‘tool’ upon many of his materials, imparting them with their own, very *visible*, acumen. He entwines “sophisticated modes of communication among nonhumans, the strange agency of physical systems at far– from–equilibrium states, and the animation of objects by video technologies—an animation whose effects are not fully captured by the idea of ‘commodity fetishism’”.²

It’s helpful, instead, to think of Lauschmann’s tool–materials as *technologies of enchantment*: “The power of art objects stems from the technical processes they objectively embody: the *technology of enchantment* is founded on the *enchantment of technology*.”³ 40 household tools and appliances perform a phased musical score by sequentially turning on and off (*Piecework Orchestra*, 2007).⁴ A global flash mob of 350,000 people

¹ Paul Kristeller, “The modern system of the arts”, in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 12, 1951, p. 496–527.

² Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics*, Princeton University Press, 2001, p.4

³ Alfred Gell, ‘The Technology of Enchantment and The Enchantment of Technology’, in *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*. J. Coote and A. Shelton, eds. Oxford: Clarendon, 1992, p44.

⁴ Techne was distinctly domestic in the ancient world.

simultaneously jump up in the air in an effort to ‘stop global warming, extend daytime hours and create a more homogenous climate.’ (*World Jump Day*, 2006). While the persons and things animated here by Lauschmann are decidedly, deliberately, ordinary, by imploring them to behave in extraordinary ways he is able to make them appear to have uncanny powers. As a result, these performances *seem* to have been “produced by magical means”.⁵ Herein lies the hold they have over us, the enchantment of technology. The invocation of ‘magical means’ is heightened by Lauschmann’s assiduous use of vibrant tool–materials that physically embody heterogeneous temporalities.

“This model of time is a kind of transtime, and thus, is moving across, cutting back, toward and forward simultaneously. But this is also trans time to the extent that it is out of sync and out of joint.”⁶

A cross section cut through Lauschmann’s works discloses a polytemporality in which now–and–then are intertwined, wherein duration draws attention to how we experience time through our relations with things. Many of the works gyrate on a loop, the duration of which might be embodied, equally, as ‘seasonal’ (birth, fall, death, rebirth) and as evanescent (the never–to–be–repeated). The opening titles of a range of movies from emphatically different genres and periods are briskly spliced together to form an anxious, meandering melodrama without *dénouement* (*Skipping over damaged areas*, 2010). The glitchy mechanics of the digital versatile disk ensnare us in an immortal coil that endlessly folds back upon itself. Ten desk lamps take it in turns to illuminate a small pile of rubble (*Lifelike*, 2008), a relay flashing in perpetuity. A pianola suddenly springs to life, is lit by a spotlight and plays a discordant tune. Snow falls upon its keys. The light fades (*The Coy Lover*, 2011). A streaming video of a mid–19th century derby is frozen in an infinite loop – that dreaded spinning wheel–of–death – never quite managing to load, never revealing anything of its past or future (*Before the Revolution*, 2011). The horses are jammed in defiant pose, all four legs outstretched, the longue durée of the painted image making its last stand against the short–termism of high shutter speed photography. In each case, different invocations of time; deep and momentary, linear and circular; fleeting and perpetual, pile up on top of each other.

⁵ *ibid.*, p46.

⁶ Jen Boyle, “Biomedia in the time of animation”, *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies*, Vol.1, 1/2, p45.